

**UNIVERSITY OF MASSACHUSETTS LOWELL
CENTER FOR LOWELL HISTORY
ORAL HISTORY COLLECTION**

**SHIFTING GEARS PROJECT
NORTH ADAMS**

**INFORMANT: MARLA MELITO
INTERVIEWER: CHRISTINE KELTON
DATE: MAY 13, 1989**

**C = CHRISTINE
M = MARLA**

SG-NA-T035

Tape begins with interviewer:

C: This is Christine Kelton and I am interviewing Marla Melito for an oral history project. And the date is May 13th, 1989. And it's about 3:30.

Marla, uh, how big is your immediate family?

M: Um, six people.

C: And how many of those are boys, and how many are girls?

M: There's two boys and two girls.

C: Umhm. And how about relatives on your mother's side?

M: Um, I know there's four children from my grandparents. So my mother has two sisters and a brother. And then, oh gee. Let's see, my aunt has three, probably about seven kids.

C: On your Mom's side?

M: Yeah.

C: Okay. And are you like close, are you close to them?

M: On my mom's side we're close to one of my aunt, well actually two of my aunts. My uncle lives in Pennsylvania so it's hard to see him a lot. But my two aunts that live around here we're close to.

C: Uh huh. And how about your cousins? Do you (--)

M: Um, my cousins of my aunts that live up here I know, but the ones down in Pennsylvania I know them, and like I talk to them, but I don't really know a lot about them.

C: Um, you cousins that live up here, do they live in the area around here, or do they live in Massachusetts?

M: Um, two of them live in Long Meadow, they're little. [C: Okay] They're probably nine, ten. And then my aunt, my other aunt's children are twenty-one to like twenty-five. [C: Uh huh] Two of them live in Connecticut and one of them lives in Lake George.

C: Okay. How about on your father's side?

M: I think there's like six kids. I have no idea how many cousins, because they had so many. [C: Uh huh] And they're a lot older. [C: Uh huh] So, a lot of them are married.

C: Uh huh. Um, can you tell me anything that you remember about say, your grandparents on either your father, or your mother's side?

M: Um, on my father's side my grandfather didn't speak english. So he spoke good pigeon english, which (--) I just remember Steve and I never understood him. So he'd sit there and tell us. We'd always just sit there and go, yup, yup, yup, sure. [Both laugh] And then my grandmother, she's still alive. But they're like an Italian family. I mean like the really stereo, typical Italian. Like bake and make spaghetti sauce. And then on my mom's side my grandfather and grandmother were more conservative. Like my grandfather really stressed education. He went to Holy Cross on a baseball scholarship. [C: Umhm] And so he came back and he's was a principal. And so he really was always education. Wrote a book about education. So that side of the family was always more education, where my father's side was more like family.

C: Uh huh. Um, let's see. Okay. I was going to say. So only one of your grandmothers is living now? [M: yeah] Do you remember like anything she told you about her past that might be interesting, or (--)

M: [Laughing] She told me she met my grandfather at a wake.

C: Okay!

M: I guess that he was engaged to some girl in Italy and he decided to stay here.

C: So then your grandparents came over from Italy to here?

M: My grandfather came over [C: Uh huh] like when he was in his twenties. [C: Umhm] And he worked at I think it was in Climax Candy Factory, or something? [C: Uh huh] My

grandmother tells me these stories, but I never remember, because she just like tells you them so many times. I don't know. But my grandmother was born in America, but her parents came from Italy.

C: Uh huh. Did they live in this area, or (--)

M: Yeah, I guess so. My grandmother, I think they lived down, there used to be a building maybe where Dunkin Donuts is I think. [C: Uh huh] There used to be apartments. I guess down there.

C: Uh huh. Now um, is this, this isn't your grandfather, Steven father, is it?

M: No, that's my mom's father.

C: Okay. Now he was a principal at Drury High School at North Adams, right? [M: Yup] Um, do you remember any stories he ever told you about being a principal there, or (--)

M: I don't really remember. He just sort of was really quiet. So he'd like play, he taught me how to play baseball. When I started playing softball he bought me a glove and he bought me a ball. And I just remember, I remember going up there when we were little. But he usually was working. So. Or he was playing golf. He usually was there, but not like the whole time, because I'd go to kindergarten for a half a day, and then we'd go to my grandmother's house.

C: Um, was that at the old Drury, or the new Drury?

M: The old one I think.

C: Uh huh. Okay. Um, let's see. Tell me a little about your family life, past, and maybe the present and future. Like things that you might have done when you were younger, or (--)

M: Like what kind of things?

C: Picnics, you know, or whatever you were doing.

M: Uh, I don't know. All I remember like family-wise when I was younger. I remember there were a lot more like family reunion type things. Like that's when all of my aunts and uncles and cousins were a lot younger. So most of my cousins on my Dad's side were probably like in high school when I was like in grammar school, or in college. So I remember going there and being really shy because they were so much older and I was just like the little kid. And I was like the youngest one. And then on my mom's side I was like the youngest child every time that we had a family reunion and stuff. So I really didn't like it. [Laughs] I think that when I was younger we used to have a lot more family type things to do. And like I remember my family used to take us to museums a lot more. And Boston. We used to go like to different places a lot more than we do now. But I think that was a lot because Steven and I, there's a big gap between Steven and I, and Peter and Katie.

C: And tell me a little bit about, you have an older brother, right? [M: Yup] And then two younger brothers and sisters. So um, and Steven's in college?

M: Yup, at Colgate.

C: And does he ever tell you any interesting stories about Colgate?

M: He tells me stuff, but he (--) I don't know, we're not as close. We were more competitive when we were younger. [C: Umhm] Peter, Katie and I are probably the closest. And I think Steven and Katie are probably closer than Peter and Steven. And I think I'm closer to Peter. [C: Uh huh] So it worked out strange.

C: Uh huh. Um, you've probably worked in this area all of your life. [M: Yeah] Okay. Um, now, can you tell me where you went to school say, when you were younger and then now?

M: I went to [East?] School, which is now Sullivan School, and then I went to the [Sylvia O. Conte?] Middle School, which was Middle School. And then just Drury.

C: Um, how did you feel like about Middle School when you were there?

M: I don't know. I never really cared much. I don't know. I don't really like the schools around here. I don't know. Maybe it was just me. I thought it was fun, but I think it was at the time when I was like a chubby little kid and I really was just not happy.

C: Do you, um, was it the teachers, or students, or just atmosphere, or something about it?

M: I mean I think I was more, I was happy with the teachers and I had friends that I liked a lot and everything, but I think it was I was unhappy with myself. Because like I danced, but then I quit dance like right when we moved. Because I think it was, when we started Middle School we had just moved here. So I started Middle School in a new neighborhood. So I was really unsure about that. And so I really didn't like the sixth grade because I had just moved. And all of my friends were in like Gold house and I was in Green house. [C: Umhm] So I had to start all over again.

C: Um, so there's two divisions in Middle School, the Green and the Gold? Was that um, is that by area they divided people, or was it just (--)

M: I don't know how they divided them. I think they just like take a list and split it in half.

C: Okay. Um, now, now you're, well you're at your senior year at Drury. So can you tell me a little bit about how life has changed since you were a freshman, or any thoughts you have on (--)

M: I don't know.

C: Has it been the same, or (--)

M: I think when you're a freshman you look up to the seniors and you can't wait to get there, you know. It's like uh, they're so wonderful. You get there and it's like, I can't stand my class. These guys are such immature brats. And when you're a freshman they're like, oh, they're so cool. You know, it's just like. And you watch the freshmen now and they're the same way you were when you were a freshman. It's like, no, I couldn't have been like that.

C: Uh huh. Let's see. What things have you participated in, in school?

M: Cross country and drama club, and student government, and band. And I'm trying to think. [Laughs]

C: Well tell me like what you like. Which ones you like the most, or which ones you like the least and I mean, why?

M: Well I started sports. Like I started tennis, but I didn't like the coach. And I started track, but I didn't really have time. So I mean those are the things I really didn't like a lot, because of the tennis, I didn't like the coach at all. So I think sports might have been my least favorite, because the coaches were sort of, didn't understand if you (--) I can remember cross country. The reason I didn't do it senior year was because I went and told the coach I was working and I couldn't go to summer practices because I was at school all summer. [C: Uh huh] And he said, well then, nanana. And he gave me this big long lecture about why I wasn't there and how should I be able to run if I couldn't go to summer practices. I think that was really stupid.

C: What, um, do you think that people like say, well maybe on sports teams, or people that you know who are on sports teams, do they come across like in a different way? Or how do you think their attitudes are towards others?

M: I think the male like sport people are more chauvinistic towards women. I think there's a big you know, oh you're just a girl. Uhhh, [C: uh huh] you just want to go, go away, you're stupid. And they sit (--) And like the football players all think they're going to go off and become these great football players. And they're you know, and you sit there and like, you're not. I mean I was really disenchanted with the whole thing. Like I figured you know, I'd get into a really good school and you know, I never have to see these people again. And now I find myself going to a lesser school for a year to transfer out just a simple fact that I don't know what I can do. Because I feel like these people around me have like you know, shot you down so many times for being intelligent.

C: Okay. Well what college, school are you going to [unclear]?

M: I'm going to go to Hartwick for a year and then hopefully transfer maybe to Clark. I was accepted there, but I didn't think I could handle being in the middle of Worcester. So.

C: Uh huh. Uh huh. Is that (--) Now Worcester isn't a big city, right? Is it, or?

M: It's smaller than Boston. It's the second city, largest city in Massachusetts. But Clark is like right in the center. I mean I went there and I was scared. [M: Uh huh] And so I figured if I

went to Hartwich for a year I could probably get comfortable with the college scene. And then if I went there I could be more, you know, I'd be comfortable enough with college to be able to go and handle the city.

C: Now I know like you're a lot into drama. And you've been in several plays and things. Do you like acting and arts?

M: I like it a lot. I really do. I wanted to go to like a really strong art school, but I looked at [Skidmore?] and it was really a strong art school, but I didn't like the people. [C: Umhm] So I was just sort of (--) If I do decide, I mean I'm sure that I probably will transfer, which is probably the wrong attitude to go into college with, but I didn't know what I was looking for. And I sort of applied from a hat. I mean I really feel stupid about it.

C: So you're undecided then going into Hartwich, or, or you have a major?

M: I'm going to go into Hartwich, but I think I want to major in psychology. [C: Uh huh] And so I'm going to find one of the top ten. I mean Clark isn't a top ten psychology school. So I'm pretty sure if I re-apply with the transfer I could probably get in.

[C: Uh huh] And so if I decide to go there, and I might look into other ones that were good, but not in the middle of a city.

C: Uh huh. Do you feel like um, your having attended Drury has helped you, or hindered you from getting into a good college, or?

M: I think it hindered me personally. I think the Guidance Department doesn't tell you anything. [C: Umhm] I mean I felt like, they were telling me "oh yeah, you can get into [unclear]. Oh yeah, well it might be hard, but you can probably get in." And my SATs were so low. And it's just like they didn't be realistic. They didn't say, why don't you apply here, they don't take SATs. They just said, "oh, try there." [C: Umhm] And they didn't really know what I wanted. So I was just applying to these schools that they told me to with no idea.

C: Um, subject wise do you think Drury has been you know, beneficial, harmful, or not, you're not really sure?

M: I think the teaching staff is really good in the honors programs. I think the the CP generally I can't generalize with all of them, but most of them, there's a different feeling between honors class and the CP. Because I do really poorly math, so I took CP math all the way through. And when you're in there you feel like the teachers are sort of looking down on you. [C: Umhm] Whereas like in honors english and honors history it's sort of like you're on a more of an equal level, instead of (--)

C: Do you feel like it's only the teachers, or do you think like other students do as well.

M: I think the students too. I mean I think if you're in honors course the general people who are in all CP's sort of look at you like, "oh you must be straight A, you must not do anything besides go to school." I don't know, people don't seem to want to accept the fact that you're intelligent.

They want you to be just like them.

C: Uh huh. Um, do you feel like at Drury there are divisions like separate sort of maybe groups, you know, the brains, the joxs and different things?

M: I think they're separate groups. I mean they're sort of integrated. I mean there are a lot of people who are intelligent in with the joxs, you know. So it's not really like one big thing, but I think it's really clicky. Like people that I know have to feel like they justify themselves. Like one girl going to an all-girl school has to (--) I feel like every time I talk to her I feel like she has to justify why she's going there, instead of just being able to go there. I think her friends are probably saying, ooh, you know, an all women's school! Why there? So I don't know. I think people have to bring themselves down.

C: And how do you feel about that? Does that [unclear]?

M: I think that bothers me a lot. Because I don't, the one thing that bothers me is that people at Drury don't seem to accept you for who you are. [C: Umhm] I mean I was walking down the hall the other day and somebody was calling some kid who was Black a spook. I mean that is just disgusting. I'm sorry. I mean it should be like, there should be no racism and there's still racism.

C: No I know that you went to, last summer you went to [Northfield, Mt. Herman?]. Um, did that have any affect on how you saw Drury, or the people back in North Adams?

M: I think it opened my eyes that there, you can, I don't know. When I was there I mean we talked politics at luncheons. And you go to Drury and people, "oh, my hair!" You know, it's just like, oh my god, go away! So I think it affected me that I don't want to be near people like that for the rest of my life. So it scared me into realizing that I can be stuck in a town like this for the rest of my life, where no real (--) I mean people just don't think of like conflicts. Things like you know, I sit there and you know, you wonder like, what would it be like if there was no such thing as time, or there was no such thing as this or that. And then you go to school and everybody like is too worried about their make-up. You know, it's just like (--)

C: Umhm. Now okay, that's an interesting point. You said stuck in North Adams. So then you don't probably vision yourself living in North Adams?

M: No. [Both laugh]

C: Okay. Um, do you know like where you'd want, or just you know, somewhere else to move to?

M: I don't know. I sort of, well I know after graduate school, or before graduate school, I want to go to California for a year just to work. And I don't know. If I really decided that I did like acting in school, in college, and if I do get the self-confidence enough I want to go and try it for a year.

C: Umhm. Okay. This is a little bit I guess on North Adams as a whole. What are impressions that you have about North Adams?

M: It's really, it's probably the most gray city that I've ever been in. I mean I remember coming back from Northfield and just coming in, and it just looked so, it looked like dirty. I mean I can't explain it. When you were driving in I was just like, I don't want to be here for another year. [C: Uh huh] And I think that's part of the reason that I just didn't think about colleges, because I was just too concern with I hate it here. And I didn't think you know, where do I want to be. I just thought you know, I don't want to be here. [C: Uh huh] So instead of being constructive about it all I was to destructive about myself.

C: Um, what about the area? The Berkshires as the whole? Do you um, find anything worthwhile in [unclear]?

M: I think it's a very pretty country, I mean with the mountains. You know, it's a very pretty atmosphere, but when you get into it there's not a lot. I mean between Williams and North, Williamstown, the people may be more intelligent, more affluent, maybe not even more intelligent, but the snobbery there is sort of I mean.

C: Do you see that a lot like as in people and not only maybe Williamstown, but at maybe other schools towards like people in North Adams?

M: I think so. I think there's a lot of snobbery towards (--) I mean I know people from Williamstown who probably you know, look down their nose at North Adams, because it's not, well you don't have Williams College and nana nana na.

C: Oh okay. Um, let's see. How about um, you've traveled a little bit. Um, what are some of the impressions you think that other people have of the area, or North Adams?

M: Most people don't even know where it is. And it's really weird because people ask you, is it near Boston? You're like no, it's the other side of the state.

C: Uh huh. Okay. Um, how about um, you were talking a little bit, not too much about the people. How do you feel about say, the teens in North Adams in general?

M: I think a lot of them don't have a future vision. Everyone wants to do for themselves right now. I mean no one really cares about their future. And it's sort of sad. Like people will go out you know, drink until. I mean that just sort of makes me mad, because you have so much in your future, so you're killing brain cells now.

C: Uh huh. Do you think North Adams has a big problem with teens partying, or (--)

M: I think so, because there's not much else to do. I mean it's such a small town and there's not a lot to go. I mean there's not like teen night clubs where they don't serve alcohol. I mean there's nothing like that around here. They're just like you know, what are you going to do on a Friday

night? Well we'll go out to a party. I mean there's nothing else to do.

C: I was just going to say, can you think of anything that maybe they could do instead of that?

M: I mean I'm sure like you go to the movies, or just go. I mean I don't see why people just, you could just go to someone's house and watch a movie or something. But I don't think a lot of people do that. I don't know.

C: How about adults do you know in the area?

M: How do I feel about them? [C: Yeah] Um, a lot of them that I know, you know, they're very nice people and they're intelligent. But it seems like they're the old world of North Adams. [C: Uh huh] It seems like the people who were here that I knew as a child have moved out. Like I knew people who were weavers. And I had a really weird childhood. I mean I'll admit that. I mean the people I knew were really different. I mean I knew people who's kids, they were, their parents were artists and you know, it was people like that. And they've all moved out of there.

C: Now did they, why did they leave the area? Was it just because they found a different job, or?

M: Um, I'm not really sure. I know one person who went on to be a president of a college. And I know that one of the people I knew, her parents were weavers, or they went to Cape Cod. I think it was probably more opportunities there for people who were more artistic.

C: Um, what do you think opportunities are for people in North Adams? Whether for jobs, for (--) Well just take teens for instance.

M: I think the only real jobs there are like blue collar, like working in a factory for the summer. Or McDonald, or Burger King. I mean there's not a lot in terms of like office work I don't think.

C: Umhm. How about adults too?

M: I don't see much job opportunities here at all. I mean there's just (--) It seems like the only jobs you see [few words unclear]. They're just like you know, um, construction worker. You know, there's not a lot of professional job opportunities here.

C: Um, how about the Mass MoCA project that's being plant in North Adams? Do you see that as a positive impact on North Adams? Or do you feel that maybe it will have a detrimental impact? Or that maybe it won't even come about?

M: I don't (--) I mean I think (--) I don't know why they'd want to put a museum here. I don't know. It seems sort of weird, like a museum would totally revive an economy, but maybe it will. I mean it would probably give more people jobs, but I think it will be the same kind of jobs. Like janitorial, or there won't be any executive positions. People will probably be like chamber maids if there's a hotel, or you know.

C: What about the people it might bring into the area? How do you [unclear]?

M: Um, I think it will bring probably more affluent people into the area. Probably. But the thing is I don't really see why people would want to move here just for a museum. I mean I'm sure it will bring business in. But what kind of businesses come in with a museum. I don't know. It just seems really weird to like base an economy on a museum.

C: Yeah, uh huh. Um, how do you think that, when Sprague pulled out do you think that impacted the economy a lot?

M: I think it took a lot of people out of work. And I think Sprague was probably like the family network. I know a lot of people, like my grandmother worked there. And she knows a lot of people in the area because she worked there. And I'll say, oh yeah, so and so. And they're like, oh I worked with his grandmother on that. You know? I'm just like, oh!. So it seems like it was more of a family and it sort of unified the town more than it does now.

C: Uh huh. So now it's kind of disjointed. Okay. Um, uh, let's see. We talked about the area. Um, what are some things that you remember well now about North Adams that might have been different say five or ten years ago?

M: I remember as a little kid it seemed like it was a nicer place to live. [C: Uh huh] I mean it seemed like there was less crime maybe. I mean River Street didn't seem as bad. I know that's probably just classifying it as like the ghetto of the city, but it seems like there's more places that are run down then when I was a little kid. [C: Uh huh] And I don't know, I remember being able to walk down the street and not really being afraid. I mean I'm not really afraid to walk down the street now, but I know a lot of people have been chased down streets and stuff.

C: Um, do you think there's like a welfare group in North Adams? Or, and do you think there's kind of like a mentality about North Adams [unclear]?

M: I think there is a welfare group and I think the mentality is that people don't want to achieve. I mean you see so many people at Drury who have kids and they're like seventeen. It's like a big cycle. No one knows how to get out of. I mean there's no one to sit there and say you know, look, I've gotten out of this you know, and you can too. I don't think they bring enough people in to say look, you know, I grew up in a ghetto, and maybe I grew up in a really poor area of town, but I made it and I'm a professional now, and I have this. You know?

C: Do you think there's anything (--) Um, do you think these people who are on welfare, how do you feel about them? Do you think that they should get aid from the state, or (--)

M: I think there's a lot of people who take advantage of it. I mean there are people who really need it, people who are mentally incapable of working, or people who are physically incapable of working. Or mothers who are single mothers and have a lot of kids, and can't afford to go out and work a forty hour a week, because they have to watch their children. I mean there's a lot of people who deserve welfare, but there are a lot of people who like, use it and abuse it to buy (--)

Instead of buying food they might go out and buy like some luxury. Like what do you need a VCR for if you can't feed your children?

C: Do you think it's um, what do you think makes these people you know, not want to work, or accept money from the state and have not seemingly qualms about accepting.

M: I think that people no longer value hard work. I think it's sort of like, oh, well they're going to give me money so what's the point of working me.

C: Why do you think that's so? Is it (--)

M: I think it's like the decline of the area in general. They're not a lot of jobs to go out and get, and it's harder to get one now without the college diploma. So I think a lot of these people probably don't have college diplomas, and maybe not even have high school diplomas. So there's not real. I mean they're going to go for an interview and they're going to say well you didn't graduate high school. Then forget it even if it's just sort of menial work.

C: Uh huh. Um, do you think there's anything the town can do to help these people get off welfare, or to provide jobs for them that might if not provide the same, at least partial, you know?

M: I think that they could, if they introduced businesses in the area they should introduce probably like daycare centers, low cost daycare centers for the people who want to work, put their children in, to put them in. And like in the daycare centers, even if they're just places, not just for like younger children who don't go to school, but even for children like kindergarten, or grammar school, to go to after school and have people there who will support, be really supportive to them. [C: Uh huh] And help them sit down and do their homework and learn the discipline that's needed to get by through school, and get through college, and the work world.

C: Um, do you think that, well this is again going back to Mass MoCA, that if Mass MoCA was here, how do you think it would affect these people on welfare. Do you think [unclear]?

M: I think it will push them out, push them out of the area probably. I mean where are they going to put them if they're making condos out of their houses?

C: True. True. Okay. Um, what do you know about Greylock funding, or anything. Or are you familiar with the project itself?

M: I don't really, all I really know about it is they're worried about the ecology. I mean that's all I really know on it.

C: Uh huh. Okay. Um, do you think (--). Um, I get (--). Do you think it would be beneficial to Adams, or to the area [unclear]?

M: I think it would be beneficial, but then again. I mean the area, one thing about the area that keeps it probably a tourist attraction is the nature aspect. I mean there's not a lot to come here

and see. I mean there's a Clark Art Institute, and there's probably, I don't know what there is in North Adams to come and see. It would be the Hoosic Tunnel, but [laughs]

C: Um, okay. This is kind of on a different light. Um, uh, tell me like maybe things that you remember maybe doing in North Adams, such as, that maybe make you feel part of North Adams, if there are any. I don't know.

M: Um, I think when I was younger I was probably proud of North Adams, because there was a lot to do. I mean when I was a little kid we used to walk, I used to live on Franklin Street, so we'd walk down Franklin Street and go to the playground down where Freeman's School is, used to be. And I mean there's a little store I remember down the street that we could just walk down instead of having to walk all the way down to I think it's Eagles, or Bills, or something. I don't know what it is now. But I think it was a lot safer up there too. I was like a nice little community to grow up in. Sort of like a Mayberry type place. [C: Uh huh] You know, sort of like you could walk down the street. And I used to think it was neat, you could walk down the street and know like almost everybody who passed by. And if you didn't know them you probably knew somebody in the family.

C: Uh huh. Do you think like people's attitudes have changed over the years. That whereas they're more like out for themselves? Or do you think it's just that the area has gotten [unclear].

M: I think people are probably more out for themselves. I don't know if it's just that. But I think the people who have moved in are the ones who sort of can't survive in another economy. I think the people who were like the white collars have moved out and replaced by blue collars.

C: Umhm. What was I going to say. Oh. Do you uh, remem(--). Okay, let's see. How about the Fall Foliage Parade they have over here. Do you, how do you feel about that? I remember when I was little it used to be this big thing. We use to make a float. [C: Uh huh] I mean I remember we won like first place one year. I mean it was better I think when I was little. I don't know if it's just when you're younger everything just seems bigger and better, but I think when I was younger it seemed like there was more, I don't know, maybe more people there. And it wasn't, now it seems sort of like really, it's like something that's decayed. Like I remember when I was younger everything was sort of fresh and new, and it was sort of crisp. And now it sort of seems like everything is sort of like getting (--) It's like a piece of paper in the water, when you first put it there it's still white, and as it starts to sit there it starts to decay and separate and turn gray.

C: Uh huh. Um, how do you feel that um, I don't know if this is going to work. I know your father is involved in like politics in North Adams. How does he feel like about the area?

M: I mean I know he likes the area a lot. I mean they talk about moving every so often. But you know, I know that he'd never want to move out up here, because he grew up here and his roots are here. [C: Umhm] I mean I think he's got, he has a lot of faith in mankind, I know that. I mean he thinks a lot of people in general. Even if they're on welfare it doesn't seem to matter to him. So he's not like, he doesn't care whether you were (--) I mean I've been with him and we've met people. [phone rings]

C: Pause.

M: I can remember like we'd be meeting people who were probably high business executives. My uncle owns, he's an entrepreneur, and he does an international business. So he travels around the world. We've met people through him who have been you know, very wealthy and very you know, highly educated. And I had been with him, I had been with him when we've met people who were down the street like who are on welfare and stuff. And I mean he's the same to each people. I mean he's just himself and he just accepts everyone. And so he you know, he just has this very broad faith in people in general. And I don't know if it's a hindrance in political or not, but I think that it's something to be valued in people in general.

C: Uh huh. Does your mom like the area?

M: I don't really know. She does, but she doesn't. When we go to visit my aunt in long meadow, which is right outside of Springfield, I think she likes it there better. And she'd be happier in someplace like that. But I'm not sure if that's just because of the opportunities that are available there more so than here.

C: What are some opportunities that are there that we don't have here?

M: Um, there's more of a community I think. I don't know if it's just because of the money that's there. I mean it's a very wealthy community. Like my cousins have, take tennis lessons through the school, and they ski through the school. And the schools are probably better in general like with extra curricular things than we have here. I mean here is basically sports. But I think there they have more musical things. And I think she'd be happier with more cultural [C: umhm] activities than here.

C: Um, are there any cultural activities around the area that people can go to if they really had the initiative?

M: Um, I know there's a lot in Williamstown. I don't think there's, I can't really recall many here. I know that here there's the concerts in the Middle School and there's the High School concert. And if people really wanted to go to those they could. I know in Williamstown they have people come speak. I went to see Ralph Nader. And they have bands, like classical music come there. So I think there's a lot of opportunities in the area, but you have to look for them. It's not like you can go and just walk down the street and there's a club to go and listen to a jazz band.

C: Uh huh. If you had children and you happened to be living in the area, what, what would you do with your kids so they you know, wouldn't be sitting home doing nothing, or going out causing trouble?

M: I think I'd sent them I mean, when I was younger I danced a lot and I thought that was probably, and I think that makes you more self confident in general. And I think it makes you a

little more graceful than if you're playing baseball or something. I think like doing something cultural, like music, dance, art, gives you more of a creative outlook than like sports. I mean I like sports and all, but it seems like when you go the people are just so aggressive I mean. They don't, I hate going to like little kids softball games and stuff, because it's just like the parents are like aaah! And you're sitting there and you're like "don't yell at your kid for striking out, it's not his fault? It's his first game." And the parents are just too, you know, you have to win. It's not like you can't just go and paint something and have it be beautiful no matter what it is. It's like I have to win. So there's no (--) I think with sports it's black and white. You either win or you lose. But in like art, like music, or dance, there's room for improvement and there's more, you can see it more than in sports.

C: Are there, are there any um, businesses, not businesses, but opportunities for, for young children, or even for teens to be involved in that in North Adams?

M: I know there's a lot of dance studios. I know that, I don't know about a lot of them. I mean I dance with this studio and I think that's probably the best one in the area. I danced with like, I danced with probably most of the people who are here. And I danced like at Lynn Smith, but that sort of was like, you go there and you learn how to do a shuffle ball change, and you do the same thing for eight years. Where if you go to the studio, I think it was more concerned with internal expression through dance. So I think that, I mean there's opportunities, but I don't think this studio is based like in Adams. So you have to travel to get there.

C: Uh huh. Um, you talked a little bit about sports. Do you think North Adams is a sports, a more of a sports minded community, or [unclear]?

M: I don't know. Like sports to me are sort of like, I don't really like sports. And that's just because I think for me they hind, they're like sort of pushing the human aggression. I think that in my personal opinion I mean it doesn't have to be mine, it's mine, it doesn't have to be everyone's, but sports sort of just make people more competitive. I mean I like sports. I like doing cross country because it was an individual sport. And it didn't matter if you ran, [mumbles words], won or lost, but I mean if you ran the whole complete race and you made it, I mean it was like this big victory. At least for me it was. And so I think like sports like that are good. And like soccer teaches a very, teaches you how to work as a team. But like football, it's like let's go bash some heads. And if you listen to football players, they're all like you know, kill and let's beat each other up. I mean it's not like they're not fostering group effort, they're fostering you know, see who I can kill, you know, on the football field. [C: Uh huh] I don't know, and that sort of bothers me about sports in general, because they're too blood thirsty. There's not, it's not like competitive effort. It's not like an effort where you know, you're fighting as a team, not to win but to work as a team and do the best you can as a team.

C: Umhm. What do you think of like the, the rivalry that goes on between schools, like such as the Drury [Hoosic?]. Every year we have the football game and we have the burning of the [Hoosic?] dummy.

M: It seems kind of stupid now, because there's not really, it doesn't seem like there's rivalry anymore. It's sort of like you know, just ceremony. [C: Uh huh] I don't know, like the snake

dance. I mean it's, I'm sure that it's probably, I mean it's fun when you're in high school and stuff, but I think it extends even till like after high school. I mean you know people who are like in their forties and they're still going to the football games, it's like oh, kill Hoosic.

C: Do you think that um, it's good for, for high school students to do something like this? Or do you think it would, it's more harmful to them?

M: I think it's good to be on a sports team so you know what it's like to work as a team and work with other people. But I think the coaches are too concerned with winning.

C: Uh huh.

M: In general. I don't know. Like the coaches to me don't seem very, don't really care about the players. I mean I'm sure they do. I can't say that. But like on the band trip, like I know one girl who didn't go on the band trip, because her coach said he'd bench her for the rest of the season if she went [C: umhm] and miss that one team. I mean the coaches don't really seem to want you to have any other outside activities except for their sport.

C: Do you feel like say at Drury that band, or maybe even art, or some other subject like that is um, looked down upon, or not given as much recognition as say, you know, a sports team or even any of the other regular subjects?

M: I think like, I've taken art. This is the first time I've taken art. And art is sort of like a course that seems like if you need a credit you go and take art, or if you need a credit you go and take chorus. I mean band is different because you have to learn how to play an instrument. [C: Uh huh] But like chorus, I mean it's difficult to sing, but even if you're off key, if you try hard I'm sure that you can pass. But I think it seems like those courses, if you take them people are like, oh, you're taking art? You know, sort of look down upon as like an unchallenging course with like your mind. But I mean I don't think people realize how, that it is challenging. I mean I'm sure (--) I mean the instructor, I mean he's, I'm sure he has a lot of potential, but he works with so many people who just don't care that right now when I take the class I mean he's really a nice guy and I think that he has a lot of potential as an artist, but he's worked for these people for so long that he treats everyone like amateurs.

C: Um, do you think that's a thing specific to Drury, that students who are in art don't care? Or do you think it's just something that happens in a lot of schools? That kids take these courses and (--)

M: I don't know. I mean I know people who've gone into Drury and taken art who are going on. I mean I know one boy, he's at Syracuse taking art there. And a girl who's at Boston University majoring in art. So I mean people are majoring in art, but I think the majority at Drury are just people trying to get a credit. But I don't know about other schools. I mean I know people at other schools, I know my cousin where he goes to school, art if a major in high school. I mean you can major in art through high school and then just go on. So I think it might be, it might just be something made into areas that are basically working class communities. Because art is sort of one of those things that, if you don't have time to go and appreciate it, it's like what's the point.

I mean if you're working like a sixty hour week, you're not going to want to go to a museum and look at you know, Monet. But if you're working forty hours a week and you have the time on the weekends to go into like let's say, a museum, and you know just to be able to distinguish with Monet and a [Manae?] and a Vangot, and I think then it's more appreciated.

C: Um, recreational wise what do you think North Adams has to offer? Like say swimming areas, or hiking [unclear].

M: Um, I think there's a lot of offer recreationally. I mean there's a lot of places to hike at the Cascades. And you can hike around Mt. Greylock. And swimming wise we'd fish pond. But the only thing that I don't know about it is like the quality of the water and the soil. I mean I'm sort of worried about like PCB. It's like on a cross country trail I mean there's those big patches of like rud soil and you don't know what exactly they are. So it's just like I'm going to die, my feet are going to fall off. [Both laugh] You know, so stuff like that you're sort of scared about.

C: Uh huh. Um, okay. You talked about before that you thought this area was pretty. Why do you think, do you think that other people come up to this areas because it is pretty?

M: I think people probably come to this area because they, I mean there's not a lot of places in the country that I like best. I mean when you go down south it's all really flat. And I know when I've been down south, like a lot of the houses there are like these little tiny shacks and like there's a big car in front. I mean there's not like stately houses. I mean you come here and the houses are all pretty stately. I mean no matter what condition they are, if you look at them the architecture is really good. And, and like in general down south I mean, there probably isn't a lot of attention paid to the architecture except, except on the plantations probably. And it's so flat. I mean when you come up here it's such a difference. I mean even from New Jersey, I mean it's really flat in New Jersey, but when you come up here there's the mountains. And there's a lot of, like in the fall it's really pretty with the foliage and stuff.

C: What do you see like for the future of North Adams? Do you think that it's going to change, or do you think it's going to go downhill?

M: I think it has a lot to do with the city government right now. I mean I don't think, I think you need people in there who are able to work with people from the city. I mean I don't, I mean this sounds really awful, but I think you need people probably not really native from the area. I mean I know this is really bad, because John Barrett, my father ran Buster Browns, but I don't think that he's capable of dealing with people from the city, because he's [C: John Barrett?] such a small town person. I mean you have to be able to play the game if you're going to run people from the city. Because I mean people from the city generally take advantage of you. I mean not all, but the majority if they can get a quick buck, they're going to get it. I mean North Adams is a perfect opportunity to like cut back on certain things when you're building. Because I mean people in the government aren't really going to know if this and this and this is so. Because in the city (--) I mean in the city I know when I've, it's so different from being here. I mean people are a lot more trusting in a town like this. [C: Uh huh] So I don't know, unless the government shapes up I don't think that there's going to be, I think it might be more of a disaster. [C: Uh huh]

C: Do you think that the present Mayor has helped the economy at all, or?

M: I know the one think about that bothers me is that he says, like the Mayor says that he'll bring in business, but if there, no new business. [C: Umhm] It's sort of like, it's all talk and no action. I mean I haven't seen any new businesses move in the area, and for the most part all I've seen are people moving out. So I think he's sort of fostering in effect a welfare community.

C: Uh huh. Does he, do you know what his feelings are like on welfare, or? I mean I remember being at school and I remember we were at like a student career day in the sophomore year, and we had him come talk. It was for the law part, or politics, or something. And he came in and told us about the bums who were on Main Street. I mean that's the work he used. He called them dirtballs and he told us how they had nothing better to do than be on Main Street. And yet then he goes and he's in the public eye and he says, you know, how wonderful the town is and how we can do everything. And yet he fosters this image of you know, people being dirtballs hanging out and dreamishing downtown. And I think when he said that I mean I was sort of shocked, because here he is you know, preaching that the town can do anything, and yet he's calling certain areas of the town, you know, people are dirtballs, I mean what can you do? And that's the term he uses.

C: Um, do you think there are a lot of like homeless people, or?

M: I mean there's a lot of stuff here that I probably don't even know. I mean I had a meeting with a professor down at State College and he was telling me about how some Williams students came in and were investing the prostitution ring. And I didn't even know there was prostitutes in the area. I don't know if there still are, but he was saying how these students had went down and gotten involved and like the pimps tried to like beat them up and stuff when they went back to go talk with these girls about the conditions they were under. And I know they were like circulated in from Albany, because that's what my professor told me. But I think there's a lot of stuff here that's not in the area, but people come in with it. I'm sure like a lot of the drug trafficking, I'm sure there's probably mob connections here. I don't know.

C: Okay. Um, let's see. Okay. Well let's talk about your future goals.

M: Um, future goals. I think one of the main ones is to get out of this area. I don't know if it's basically because I see it as a trap. I mean a lot of people come back here are unhappy here. I mean there are a lot of people who choose to go to North Adams State, and they're very happy living here. But for me it's just not what I, I'm just not happy being in a town where (--) I don't know. I don't know if it's the way the area is and what they hold as being maybe like their sacred things to do. Like going to sports and sort of you know, having softball leagues. I mean I'm sure (--) I liked (--) I mean that stuff is fine and everything, but I need more from a community. I mean I want a community where I can go to, I mean not like Williamstown. I mean I like Williamstown, the atmosphere, but I don't like the people there. I think there's too much snobbery, because I know people who go there and they'll have like the five colleges that are probably the most accepted for people from Mt. Greylock to go to. And if you don't go to like Carnegie [Mellon?], or Harvard, or something, or Amherst, or Williams, it's sort of like you

know, you're looked down upon. And there's like this packing order. Like if you're not Sir William's College professor's student child, or something. And it sort of, [unclear] sort of drives me nuts. I'd like to go to a community where people, it's probably a utopian community, it's probably not such thing, but a place where people in general just accept people for who they are and there's a lot of things to do more artistic probably. I mean I don't know if that's the right word to use, but more cultural like. I like, I'd rather listen to a concert than go to a sporting event. And I'd rather go to a museum than watch football on a Saturday. And I'd rather(--) I don't know, maybe I'm just weird. But I mean I'd rather just go do stuff like that. And be able to go to like see the Philharmonics, or go to Tanglewood, or go to I can't even think.

C: So then maybe you might consider living in this area, but not right around here.

M: Yup. I mean I may end up who know, like I like Springfield. I think that's, you know, they have a lot to do there. But maybe that's just because I've only, I mean I don't like there. I mean if I lived there (--) I mean I'm sure like no matter where you are if you live there it's a lot different than if you visit. So I may live in like, I like, I like Hartford a lot too. So I probably will live outside of a small city. I mean I don't want to live in New York City I mean, or Worcester, or Boston. I mean they're just too scary. I mean there's too much crime and there's too much, there's no respect for other people there.

C: If today you were to project where you might be twenty years from now, not say [unclear] where you might live, but like what you might be doing, what would you say? Would you have any idea, or (--)

M: I don't know, because right now I'm sort of. I don't even know where I want to go to college. You know, it's sort of like, it's hard, but I'd like to see myself in probably a very exciting job. I mean I don't think I could handle being, living and doing the same thing every day. I mean I'd like to, I think I might like to do, like major in psychology and then go to a graduate school for communications and work in like broadcasting, or something. Because at least then you're traveling and there's a lot to do. I mean you're not confined to the same place. I'm sure if you're a camera person there's a lot of opportunities where if you're an envelope liker you know, it would be a lot different. So I mean I can see myself doing something where I'm traveling a lot. I don't know if I'll have a family. I mean I'd like to get married and have a family, but it would have to be later in life. I mean I think that right now I have the bug just to go travel. I mean I wouldn't mind being a photo journalist for like National Geographic, or something, just to travel. I mean I want to live as much as I can before I settle down so I can have a lot to offer. I mean our director for the plays, I mean he always told the story about being in Ireland and being in Germany. And I want to be able to sit there and say, "oh I remember you know, when I was in France and you know, I was at some cafe, [unclear]. I mean I just want to be able to, be able to offer things to people who are younger than myself. I don't want to just go through life doing the same things. I want to be able to go out and then share my experiences with other people.

C: Uh huh. Well thank you very much for your time Marla. And future generations I'm sure will use this tape very wisely. Signing off!

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END OF TAPE